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*A Discourse on the Agriculture of the State of Connecticut, and the means of making it more beneficial to the State: delivered at New-Haven, on Thursday, 12th September, 1816, by David Humphreys, L. L. D. Fellow of the Royal Society of London; Honorary Member of the Bath and West of England Society; President of the Society for promoting Agriculture in the State of Connecticut; and member of many Scientifick and Literary Societies in the U. S. of America.*

*"From grave to gay--from lively to severe."*—POPE.

*He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.*

*The diligent hand maketh rich.*

*She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hand, she planteth a Vineyard.*

*Prepare the work without, and make it fit for thyself in the FIELD.*

*The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it to his mouth.*

*The slothful man saith, there is a LION without, I shall be slain in the streets.*

*The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.*

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

It is well known that General Humphreys was the first person who introduced into this country, the invaluable breed of Merino Sheep. He has since taken an active interest in the Agriculture of Connecticut, and is the President of a Society there, for its encouragement. He delivered an address to that body in September last. We have copied the title of this remarkable discourse, to aid in advertising it, as far as our limits will permit, and to make use of the occasion for a few general remarks on the present state of Agriculture among us.

It is nearly impossible to make any observations that will apply to the whole United States. In a country of such immense extent, affording such various products, each district must have its own system, and its own peculiar management. In the Southern States, where the land belonging to large proprietors, is tilled by slaves, and the produce is sugar, cotton, rice and tobacco, we are inclined to think,

that the most skill is discovered and capital employed: the Middle States, where grain of various kinds is the staple produce, would be ranked next; the Western States, where the unexhausted fertility of a virgin soil, produces exuberance with little aid from skill, may follow; and lastly, the Eastern States, possessing a variety of soil and situation, employing a great amount of labour in the aggregate, but less skill and capital in the cultivation of the earth, than either the Southern or Middle divisions of the Union.

In saying that less skill and capital are employed here, we do not wish to give offence, but to awaken attention to a subject of very great importance; and to induce active men to reflect upon the expediency, both as regards the general weal and their own interests, of engaging a part of that time and capital in agricultural pursuits, which a diminished commerce has left at their disposal. To avoid the danger of untenable positions, or which may be liable to numerous exceptions, we shall premise, that the following remarks are made in reference more particularly to the neighbouring district, though most of them, if we do not greatly mistake, will be applicable to the Eastern States generally, and some of them possess a still wider bearing.

If you ask a capitalist why he does not engage in agriculture, the universal reply is, "nothing can be got by farming." Nor is this opinion confined to them; the owners of land generally throughout the country, shew by their practice, that they entertain the same opinion. The wealthier inhabitants in the country, cultivate a farm they have inherited, and slowly improve it. The fences in the country are better and more permanent than they were twenty years ago; the fields are many of them smoother, the orchards are perhaps more numerous. There are some few places where a man would not now cut down an oak for fire wood, to plant a poplar for ornament. These are changes for the better; but how many farmers in the country, lay out their surplus income in the amelioration of their estates, in cultivating beyond the supply of their own wants, for the market? Do they not prefer hazarding their money in commerce, in manufactures, in banking, none of which they can know much about? Who are the people who say that nothing can be made by farming?—A citizen of one of the towns, who buys a few acres of land at a high rate, erects

an expensive house, costly fences, cultivates Indian corn and potatoes, feeds labourers without economy, whom he does not oversee, and finds that his corn has cost him three times what he can buy it for—or having heard that Merino Sheep produce fine wool, and fine wool commands a good price, buys a flock of sheep at a hundred dollars a piece, puts them under the care of the first man he can hire; and when dogs, diseases, and neglect have thinned his flock, finds that he has not got the golden fleece, and denounces Merino Sheep.—Yet this same individual would smile with pity at a man who should take an expensive ship, put a numerous crew on board, load her with staves, send her a long voyage, and then wonder that the portage bill devoured the freight.

If there are exceptions, if there are some gentlemen who of late years, and they are so few that we are almost afraid of being personal in alluding to them, have laid out capital in agriculture, they are too few to form an objection, particularly, as there is hardly one even of this small number, who has not cultivated a few acres more for his own amusement, than with a serious endeavour to invest capital advantageously. Is it not a fact, that till within a very few years it was universally, and is now generally believed, that wheat could not be raised in this vicinity! How much of our husbandry is there, that is not comprised in the following process? A piece of ground is broke up, planted with Indian corn in the centre, and potatoes on the borders; perhaps a few pumpkin seeds or beans are put in with the hills, and sometimes a little turnip seed scattered after the last hoeing. This same crop is continued three or four years, then the ground is laid down with barley, rye, or oats, clover and herds grass seeds—sainfoin and lucerne are unknown; when this grass has run out, the circle is completed, and the sod broken up again. We know of one gentleman who has this season planted a few acres of carrots with a drill, and who *soils* his cattle; both of the experiments, we believe, have been successful, and both are solitary and unprecedented.

We should be willing, though ashamed, to submit this question to a skilful English farmer. Suppose the following statement to be made:—thousands of acres of tolerable land may be purchased in fee simple, for not much more

than double of what is frequently paid for rent of land in England, within a convenient, marketable distance of Boston; and this market has been steadily one of the dearest markets in the world for every article, consumed by man or beast, raised on a farm, except fruit and poultry, and yet the land cannot be cultivated to advantage.—But perhaps labour is extravagantly high.—Labour is indeed much higher than in England, but taxes are vastly less.—Perhaps you cannot procure lime, gypsum or marle.—The two former we have, and probably the latter, *but we never use either for manure*: no one ever heard here of using lime for any thing but mortar; and as to plaister of Paris, it is as certain that it will not do, as that wheat will not grow on the sea-coast—perhaps your rotation of crops is bad—we never try any. The question of skill would be decided without pursuing the dialogue further.

The price of labour is so much higher than in England, that when a comparison is made between the two countries, it is considered a weighty argument against success in agriculture, not considering that the difference of the taxes restores the equilibrium. On this point we shall copy a curious statement, from Cobbet's journal of January 13, 1816. He makes a comparison between his expenses on a farm in Hampshire county, and the expenses of an American farm belonging to one of his friends near Philadelphia, and who had answered a number of queries he had sent him, respecting taxes, wages, prices, &c. The English and the American farm were very nearly of the same size, and the number of servants employed on each the same; the sums are in sterling.

On the American farm.

Five men at \$140 or 35 <i>l.</i> per an.	175
Two women over a doll. weekly, or 13 <i>l.</i>	26
	<hr/>
Labour, exclusive of board,	201
Taxes, poor and direct,	22
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	1.223.

## On the English farm.

Five men at 10 <i>l</i> .	50
Two women 3 10	7
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Labour exclusive of board,	57
Poor tax,	87 5
Property tax,	43 17 6
Assessed taxes on horses, &c.	15 10
Tythes,	36
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*l*.239 12 6.

Something might be added to the American account for the support of schools and a clergyman, though he pays no tythes, but still his expenses would not equal those of the English farm; the amount taken from the landholder is the same; in this country the largest portion of it goes to the labourer—in England to the government.

One of the great evils attending our farming, is the disproportionate size of the farms, to the means of the owner; he cultivates four or five times as much land as he can do to advantage. Another is the total neglect of the more permanent class of manures. In England, and other well cultivated parts of Europe, the farmer uses either lime or marle as a durable manure. One coat of these keeps the land in heart for years; and on this solid foundation his composts produce luxuriant crops. Here although the use of compost manure has greatly increased of late years, and its advantages are apparent, still the exhausting crop that is taken from the land, leaves it little better at the end of the season than it was before. The use of plaister, in spite of ignorance and prejudice, is making its way. In the District of Maine it is getting fast into use, and in many cases will double the crops of that country.\*

\* This mention of the use of plaister recalls to mind some remarks of a distinguished naturalist of Philadelphia, in the course of a familiar conversation a few weeks since, where the proverb was introduced, *that people were fond of novelty*. He denied its truth, and that nothing was more difficult, than to introduce improvement, or make people change their habits; that he would graduate the scale of superiority in a nation exactly in proportion to their readiness at adopting improvements.—That in Germany there was a belt of gypsum encircling the Harz mountain, and the people in the vicinity had made use of it as a

The very general cultivation of Indian corn in the Northern States, may perhaps be cited as a proof of want of judgment, or rather of an unreflecting habit of *going on in the old way*. We have some reluctance in writing against the cultivation of this beautiful plant, which presents in all its stages, a more pleasing appearance than any other crop ; and particularly here, where so much labour is bestowed upon it ; where even in the hands of the most slovenly farmer, it offers an exception to every thing else about him, and generally speaking, is the only thing in agriculture, in this part of the country, which exhibits marks of careful tillage, great labour and neatness. Still for some parts of the country it should be absolutely renounced ; for Maine, Vermont, and New-Hampshire, with few exceptions, its cultivation is an evil. It is a plant suited for a warm country, where labour is cheap and manures plenty, or the soil inexhaustible. In these districts it is often an uncertain crop, a very exhausting one, demands great labour, and makes a heavy consumption of manure. All the small grains, and potatoes, should be preferred before it, throughout the Eastern States, with a few exceptions. It affords an excellent, though a very expensive food for fattening animals, but as used for men, there is nothing but habit that can reconcile us to it. The coarse, heavy, indigestible bread which is prepared from Indian meal, would be considered by the peasants in many parts of Europe, who do not roll in luxuries, as a very despicable food. The cultivation of Indian corn consumes so large a share of labour in this country, that we think there is hardly any subject more deserving the investigation of intelligent agriculturists, and a series of comparative experiments, to determine its relative value with other species of grain.

We think the state of our salt marshes may be cited as another proof of our neglect and want of skill in agriculture. There are tens of thousands of acres of land of this description in Massachusetts alone. They are generally composed of a fat black mud, several feet in depth, which judging from its appearance and consistency, would

manure for more than two centuries ; but the use had never got farther than two or three leagues from its scite. In the United States, in the course of twenty years, it had extended over the whole country.

if freed from the salt with which it is impregnated, form a rich bottom land of inexhaustible fertility, capable of bearing almost every kind of crop. At present it yields a quantity of salt hay, which horses will not eat. Farmers sometimes go fifteen miles to cut and carry home this hay, by the aid of which they induce their cattle to consume the vile, sour trash, which they cut from their fresh water meadows. These meadows which have commonly a deep deposit of rich earth, being saturated with water, produce only a rank growth of weeds. Every person may observe, that there is a large quantity of land of this description, which might be drained at a comparatively slight expense, and converted into the most valuable grass land, because it would be seldom effected by drought. These salt marshes contribute to perpetuate the evil; if it were not for these, the farmer finding he could do nothing with his fresh water meadow, would perhaps turn his attention to draining and making his fresh meadow productive. We know it will be answered, as on other occasions; that nothing can be done with salt marshes, that dyking out the tide only destroys the present grass, and no other will grow: attempts have been repeatedly made, and without success.—It is very true that the marks of these abortive attempts may be seen in every direction, and they are standing marks of mismanagement. Has there ever been one thorough, scientifick experiment?—We know of none.—The process commonly pursued is, to make a dyke at perhaps considerable expense, and which are always imperfectly made; they serve to keep out the full tide, it never covers the marshes, but it always stands within six or twelve inches of the surface in all the creeks and ditches; there is, therefore, no chance of the soil being *freshened*, which would probably be the operation of several years to be completely effected.—We believe there is no one point in our agriculture, where it is more important that a full and fair experiment should be made. Let a convenient piece of marsh be selected, let the tide be dyked out; erect a rough wind-mill, as it is done in Holland and other countries, to pump out the water, and keep it several feet below the surface; let the surface be broken up, let chemistry be consulted for an appropriate manure to neutralize or extract the salt, and let different kinds of crops be tried. It seems impossible, that these



marshes should not be reclaimed if the experiment was properly tried ; there are certainly thousands of acres in Europe, which must have been once in the same situation, and now produce the most luxuriant crops of grain. If we could succeed, an immense quantity of valuable land would be brought into use, which it may be doubted, whether it is not now for reasons that have been mentioned, an injury.\*

The motives of policy which every state has to encourage agriculture, are as obvious as they are solid ; we therefore need not enlarge upon them here. If our system of husbandry was more perfect, a much larger population might be supported, and greater resources of every kind concentrated among us. The unbounded spirit of enterprise which exists in the United States, often degenerates into mere restlessness. The inhabitants of the eastern and middle states, sell their farms, abandon their homes, and commit themselves to the current of the Ohio, to be landed frequently in a worse situation than they left. Different causes will conspire in the course of a few years to moderate this disposition to emigration, which has been artificially excited. In the mean time we are losing not merely common labourers, but some of our most intelligent and efficient young men, who are allured to a distance in pursuit of that independence, which they might find at home, if there was a greater disposition to invest capital in agriculture. We wish that some capitalists would try the experiment fairly. Let an intelligent, active individual be selected, with the same degree of sagacity and enterprise as would be required for an important voyage ; provide him with a moderate farm, well situated ; no matter if the house and fences are not very expensive, the one should be comfortable, the other secure ; let him get good labourers, at fair wages, feed them well, but not wastefully ; let money be ready for an ample stock of permanent and annual manures, so that the labour may not be thrown away on land too poor to yield any return ; let him exert the same industry and skill in superintending the concerns of this farm for four or five years, that he would display in a commercial un-

\* It has been mentioned in the newspapers, that some gentlemen in New-York have made an experiment of this kind on a large scale. We think it extremely desirable that the experiment, carefully and scientifically made, should be tried in this neighbourhood.

dertaking, and if it shall then be found, that a reasonable interest cannot be derived for money employed in this way, we shall be ready to assent to the general opinion, that farming is an unprofitable pursuit.

There are some encouraging symptoms in favour of agriculture. More men of property are acquiring a taste for it, and though this is rather for amusement than profit, considerable good will be a necessary result. The cattle shows which have been recently established will have very beneficial consequences. The one in Berkshire has already produced good effects. The one at Brighton under the patronage of the Massachusetts Society, which commenced this autumn, was very satisfactory. It will take some years, even if the greatest exertions are made, before we shall arrive at the average of what we can perform. The improving of breeds of animals is a slow process, which demands great skill and care, and numerous experiments. The show of fat cattle at Brighton, was, as might be expected from the short notice that had been given, the novelty and imperfect apprehensions of farmers on the subject, joined to an extremely bad season, almost nothing. The exhibition could only be considered as a fair sample of what existed in the country, without any particular exertion having been made. In this point of view, the samples of sheep from the flocks, of milch cows, and working oxen, were extremely gratifying. The utility of these cattle shows has been long and amply shewn in England, and their tendency to ameliorate all the animals of a country, and therefore benefit one of our greatest staples, is incontrovertible. Subordinate to this good effect, but not to be wholly disregarded, is the stimulus it gives to individuals to seek for the enjoyment of success in this peaceful, and useful pursuit. It offers another incentive to agricultural life, and the man who fails in competition for a prize, is still a gainer in the improvements he has made. The struggle of ambition here, is almost equally useful to the parties themselves, and to their country. It affords a most useful rout to distinction, without engendering the animosity inherent in politics. There are some individuals who may be drawn off in this way to exert their talents in a manner pleasing to themselves, and useful to the community. In obtaining pieces of plate for agricultural success, they may gratify a natural and honourable love of distinction, which turned to politics, would only pester the publick with the pretension of obstinate mediocrity.